



Sir John Lawes School
Education for a changing world

Sir John Lawes School

**Education
for a
changing
world**



‘Excellent teaching, commitment to the arts and sport and a genuinely exciting co-curricular programme, all wrapped in a positive culture that wins the hearts and minds of staff and pupils, supported by an aspirational parent body. A winning formula.’

THE
GOOD
SCHOOLS
GUIDE

Welcome to Sir John Lawes School



At Sir John Lawes, our vision is to produce young people of whom we can all be proud, who have achieved more than they ever believed possible and who are ready to

contribute to their local, national and global communities.

At the heart of everything we do is our desire to ensure that students receive the highest standards of teaching and learning and a curriculum that enables them to make outstanding progress, no matter what their starting point. However, education is about much more than just exam results and our statement 'Education for a changing world' reflects our understanding that the world into which our students will emerge is an unpredictable one. They will need much more than just good qualifications – and so we are also focused on helping them develop into well-rounded individuals in all aspects of their lives.

Our shared values of the school community are summed up in the Sir John Lawes ACE: Achievement, Care and Excellence:

- Achievement in academic, artistic, sporting, cultural and other forms with a focus on teaching and learning.
- Care for students, staff and others within and beyond the school community.
- Excellent standards, manners, honesty, personal integrity and uniform.

The ACE underpins everything that we do and provides a secure basis for all we strive to accomplish.

There is so much more that marks out SJL as a place where each individual can receive the support and challenge they need to help them thrive; a prospectus only gives a glimpse. We are immensely proud of the work we do here so if you like what you see in the following pages and would like to learn more, please do visit us and experience the Sir John Lawes ACE for yourself!

[Philip Newbery, Headteacher](#)

'Pupils' experiences
at this school are
exceptional'



Outstanding Learning

Every student is different. No educational experiences are the same.

We pride ourselves on our broad and balanced curriculum. In Key Stage 3 all students study English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Modern Foreign Languages, the Arts, Technology, PE and Life Skills. Curriculum options are available in Years 8 and 9 to allow increased flexibility and choice. In Key Stage 4 all students follow a core offer although there is considerable scope for personalisation and alternative curriculum pathways. In the Sixth Form, students are able to select from a wide range of A Level subjects.

Students are encouraged and expected to become independent learners during their time with us, seeking information for themselves, challenging received ideas and coming to their own informed judgements. They demonstrate their enthusiasm for learning by having a very high rate of attendance in school, by contributing actively to their lessons and by producing work of genuine excellence.

We also enhance students' 'education for a changing world', by balancing digital and traditional learning. Every student has their own iPad to be used for learning in school and at home. This offers exciting opportunities for students to learn in creative ways whilst also developing skills ready for the digital landscape of their future. This does not, however, come at the expense of developing important skills such as face-to-face communication, handwriting and public speaking.

We have highly trained, well-motivated, dedicated teachers, many of whom have additional qualifications in their subjects or in educational study. They devote a great deal of their time to planning their lessons, producing bespoke resources and sharing their strategies with their colleagues.

Continued improvements in our facilities have supported the school's policy of providing a high-quality learning environment for all students. Classrooms, laboratories, studios and the sports hall encourage students to study in pleasant surroundings with the latest teaching resources and technologies to support them. Our media and creative facilities are probably unrivalled within the school system and comprise television and media studios including virtual studios, location filming and recording equipment.



We are delighted to be expanding our facilities with the addition of a brand-new Music Centre. This dedicated space will provide students with an inspiring environment in which to learn, rehearse, perform and develop their musical talents. Designed to support creativity and excellence in music, the new centre will further enhance the opportunities available to students and become a vibrant hub for musical life at Sir John Lawes School. The new Music Centre is due for completion in the summer term of 2027.





‘Staff induct pupils expertly into the school and clearly outline the behaviours expected in this community. As a result, excellent behaviour is ‘the norm’ at the school.’

Moving Up

Leaving primary school and moving to the new, much bigger world of secondary education can feel worrying and stressful. Our aim is to make all our new students feel welcome and safe so that they hit the ground running at the start of Year 7 and make a great start to what will hopefully be some of the best years of their lives.

If you become a Sir John Lawes student, you will receive a visit in the summer term from your new Head of Year, who will be responsible for looking after your year group when you join us. They will help you to achieve your very best and will want to find out as much as possible about you, so that we can prepare to meet all your needs when you join us in September. This will include finding out about any of your friends who will also be joining Sir John Lawes, because it is important to us that you have people around you who you like and trust.

You will also have the opportunity to visit Sir John Lawes School before you arrive in September. Our [Induction Day](#) takes place in July, when all new students visit us to meet other joiners from different primary schools, to get to know their new tutors and to get a taste of what secondary school is like. There is also an Induction Evening, when parents come to learn about Sir John Lawes, spend some time with key members of staff and ask any questions.

If you come from a primary school that is unlikely to send other students to Sir John Lawes, there is no need to worry. You are still extremely important to us! In fact, you will probably get more attention than others, because when your Head of Year visits your primary school, he or she will only be interested in you. We also give an extra opportunity for students in your position

to visit us during July, so you can spend time making new friends and will not be at a disadvantage come September.

[Get Set for S.J.L.](#), our well established summer school, takes place in August and provides all our new Year 7 students with the chance to spend three days with us before term starts, taking part in fun and exciting activities with new classmates.

The member of staff who will be most important to you during your time at Sir John Lawes will be your form tutor. He or she will see you at least twice every day and will get to know you and help you to feel comfortable and safe during your time in school, so you can focus all your efforts on your lessons.

We plan our tutor groups very carefully, trying to create a healthy balance between putting new students with people they know and like from primary school and also giving them the opportunity to [make new friends](#).

When you finally arrive as a Sir John Lawes student, you will be amazed at how quickly the time passes. Before you realise it, you will have been with us for half a term and will hopefully be off to PGL. This is a trip for all Year 7 students and we encourage you to take part. You will stay from Monday to Friday at an activity centre near Swindon, forming stronger bonds with your no-longer-quite-so-new classmates and pushing yourself to achieve things you never expected to do, like jumping from the Leap of Faith (safely harnessed, of course!). Many Sixth Form students who are leaving us look back on their first trip as one of the highlights of their time at school. You will receive more details about this trip when you find out that you will be coming to Sir John Lawes.

Sir John Lawes is a wonderful place to go to school and we do everything we can to help our students settle in smoothly.

A Typical Day

The school day consists of six taught lessons each of 50 minutes, as well as two registrations, plus an assembly.

Year 7 day:

Time	Activity
08.00 - 08.40	School opens
08.40 - 08.50	Registration
08.50 - 09.40	Period 1
09.40 - 10.30	Period 2
10.30 - 10.50	Break time
10.50 - 11.40	Period 3
11.40 - 12.30	Period 4
12.30 - 13.25	Lunch time
13.30 - 13.50	Registration
13.50 - 14.40	Period 5
14.40 - 15.30	Period 6
15.30	Home time / Clubs

Application Details

Details of how to apply to Sir John Lawes School for September 2027 are on the school website:

[Sir John Lawes School - Admissions](#)

Secondary Transfer admissions for Sir John Lawes School are handled by Hertfordshire County Council. All applicants must complete the Common Application Form of their home Local Authority. Hertfordshire residents should apply online to Hertfordshire County Council:

[Hertfordshire County Council - School Admissions](#)

The closing date for applications for September 2027 entry is 31 October 2026



A young woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a white shirt, a striped tie, and a grey vest, is focused on painting a red, leaf-like structure. She is holding a paintbrush in her right hand. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more of the red structure.

‘Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their school community, they take part in an extraordinary choice of clubs, trips and opportunities.’

Co-curricular Opportunities

The range of co-curricular opportunities available at SJL is unrivalled. With over 100 clubs running each week, they help to support work in the curriculum and enable students to learn new skills, such as teamwork and resilience, whilst having fun and making new friends.

Each year we offer an extensive programme of [concerts](#), plays and musicals, allowing students opportunities to perform before a variety of audiences. On the [sporting side](#), we offer a huge choice of activities that reflects our broad sporting curriculum. As well as traditional sports like football, rugby and netball, we also offer more unusual options such as indoor rowing and golf. PE plays a major role in our promotion of healthy lifestyles and the PE staff encourage all students to participate fully.

In addition to many trips and visits to the theatre and places of interest in the UK, students have the opportunity to travel more widely to enhance their learning. The English faculty take students to the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres. The Modern

Foreign Languages faculty offers trips and visits to locations such as Barcelona and Bingen Am Rhein, and German exchanges in Years 10 and 12. The History faculty visits Normandy in Year 9. Geographers have the chance to visit places such as the Azores, Swanage and Epping Forest and our work on the Global Dimension has enabled students to visit Downing Street, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Brussels, Germany, Iceland and New York. Musicians participate in annual band tours to destinations such as the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland. Each year a group of students takes part in a World Challenge trip, and destinations have included Morocco, Vietnam and Tanzania.

Finally we offer a huge choice of [before school](#), [lunchtime and after school clubs](#) in areas such as Media, Art, Music, Science, Astronomy, Public Speaking, Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver, Latin, Library reading groups, Chess, Young Enterprise and Dragons' Apprentice. From Film Club to Eco Garden Club, Chess Club to Trampolining Club – there's something for everyone!



Care, Guidance & Support

Successful learning thrives when students feel safe, confident, respected and valued.

From the moment a child obtains a place at Sir John Lawes, the process of supporting them to become a successful learner within a nurturing environment begins. On entering the school, all students become members of a form group comprising students of the same age who are all experiencing the same stage of their education. This marks the beginning of a strong bond with their form tutor who will maintain an overview of each child's academic and personal development. Year groups are supported by a Head of Year and Student Services Manager, who take an overview of the students' progress; we also have a school counsellor on site.

In addition every member of the SJL community, students and staff, belongs to one of seven Houses: Austen, Britten, Hepworth, King, Lawes, Newton and Ryder - all named after leaders in their field and positive role models. Students earn points for their Houses through excellent work or effort and through taking part in a range of competitions, as well as sports day. Their House group provides cross-year support and encouragement.

Careers guidance runs throughout the school years, beginning with Enterprise Days in Years 7, 8 and 9, work experience in Years 10 and 12, [careers fairs](#) in Years 11, 12 and 13, and [interview skills days](#), to give just a few examples. Students also have the opportunity to meet with our school careers staff and external careers advisers for individual advice and guidance. Each year our students progress to courses at the best universities and employment with most prestigious companies.

Students with special educational needs are well catered for by our experienced Learning Support faculty and they are given all the help they need to achieve their full potential. Appropriate arrangements are made for students with disabilities to access every area of school life.

Global Leaders

At Sir John Lawes we are equipping our students to become the informed citizens and leaders of tomorrow.

As soon as students join us they take on responsibilities such as becoming Form Representatives, Sports Leader, Charity Leader, Digital Leader, Mental Health Leader, Sustainability Leader and Diversity Leader. Later they may read with younger students, train as Peer Mentors and finally become House Captains and Prefects. Students are regularly seen taking assemblies, delivering workshops, running clubs, and making announcements and presentations to staff. Students are consulted frequently about their opinions on their own education and teachers use their responses to make improvements to their lessons. Many of these activities qualify students for the SJL Leadership Awards at Bronze, Silver or Gold levels.

We are proud of our formal structure of student leadership. Each form elects its own representatives, who meet as a Year Council. In turn, each Year Council chooses members to join the Junior Leadership Team, which is the central student leadership body in the school. The JLT is coordinated by our Heads of School, who set an inspiring example to the rest of the school and meet regularly with the Senior Leadership Team and governors.

But leadership is not only about expressing opinions; it is also about taking action to make a difference. Our students are active in campaigning for better standards of living around the world, both by raising money for and increasing awareness of a wide variety of issues. Our Oxfam Youth Action Group's activities have won us invitations to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Downing Street as well as national recognition as an Oxfam Lead School. Our Eco Schools Group is relentless in persuading us all to think about the environmental consequences of our actions and we are proud to hold the Green Flag with distinction, a prestigious national award which recognises the very highest environmental standards in schools.

"I loved getting involved in leadership roles at primary school and I was really happy to discover all the amazing leadership opportunities at SJL, it's been brilliant to keep building my confidence by taking on new responsibilities."

- Year 8 Student.



Global Learning Highlights

Awards

- We have held the International Schools Award for 13 years and the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award for 10 years. These awards recognise our achievements in relation to global learning and sustainability.

International partnerships and visits

- We are often asked to host international visitors; we have had visits from Australia, Bangladesh, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mali, Nigeria, Singapore, USA, and Zambia. Wherever possible, students are given the opportunity to meet with visitors and learn something about their culture.

Learning opportunities

- Students learn about global issues in a wide range of curriculum areas and are introduced to the concept of global citizenship in Year 7 Life Skills.
- We offer an opportunity for our Year 7 students to get involved in two different leadership projects which relate to global issues.
- Our Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to go into local primary schools to teach Modern Languages as part of a Language Leaders Programme.
- We hold an annual cultural enrichment day in which students from Years 7-10 get to explore a global theme in-depth. For example, Year 10 students are involved in a model United Nations summit on Geneva Conventions and Year 7 explore the theme of children's' global issues.
- We encourage students to take part in language learning and have a high take-up of languages at GCSE. In addition, on European Day of Languages we celebrate the wide number of languages spoken in school by both our students and teachers.
- As part of the Science CREST programme, Year 9 students have worked on projects focusing on sustainability issues. The CREST programme is available to all Year 9 scientists each year and offers an opportunity to explore scientific issues in great depth.

- Global learning and sustainability feature strongly in the Geography curriculum and the subject has a very good take up at GCSE and A Level. Sustainability is the focus of Year 9 fieldwork, which involves an investigation into how sustainable the town of Harpenden is.
- We offer our Year 9 students an enrichment course in Animal Studies which gives opportunities for students to look after animals within the curriculum and through co-curricular activities.
- Our Sixth Form enrichment talks provide opportunities for students to learn from visiting speakers about a wide range of topics including global issues.

Active global citizenship

- Students from Years 8-13 have the opportunity to carry out peer education work. This has included issues such as Fairtrade, poverty and the Send My Friend to School campaign. Students have also been involved in delivering workshops and assemblies at local primary schools.
- For the past 7 years our Year 10 students have been selected as National Campaign Champions for the Send my Friend to School campaign which involves local and national action linked to the campaign including visits to the Houses of Parliament to meet with MPs and opportunities to represent the campaign at conferences and conventions.
- Our international exchange programme gives students the opportunity to visit schools in the USA and Germany, while also welcoming students from China to our school community. These enriching experiences help students develop confidence, cultural awareness and a broader understanding of the world around them.
- We have a very active Oxfam Youth Action Group which has been running for 9 years. They are involved in a wide range of activities from fundraising events to campaigning and awareness raising.
- We have an active Eco-Schools Group which is open to students from all years. One of their biggest projects has been the design and establishment of a eco-garden. This continues to go from strength to strength, producing plants and produce that staff can buy, which reduces food miles and hence pollution.
- Active global citizenship is a key concept in Life Skills learning across the key stages. In Year 7 students learn about global issues affecting children around the world. Year 8 students study an extended unit on children's rights. In Year 9 students study other aspects of human rights and do a group project to create a film to raise awareness on an issue relating to active citizenship. Year 10 students study international politics and our Year 11 students participate in an Active Citizenship project in which they have to work as a group to plan and organise something that has a real impact on the community.



Sustainability in Practice

At Sir John Lawes we pride ourselves on growing a green consciousness in our students, so that as a school we may participate as contributing members of a global community.

- In an effort to reduce our carbon emissions we have installed Smart Metering which enables us to track our real-time energy use. We have also recently invested in renewable energy by installing solar panels to the Sports Hall, Library and Art block roofs as we move towards becoming a more sustainable school. Other initiatives have included an 'automatic' switch off for our computers at the end of the school day.
- The school travel plan encourages students to travel to school by foot and by bicycle, and for staff to do the same.
- Water and energy-saving devices are fitted across the school and we employ grounds staff who do not water plants from hose pipes.
- We have invested in more energy efficient lighting and double glazing in order to reduce our total energy use.
- We have worked hard to reduce our use of paper over the last few years through things such as increasing our use of Bromcom MCAS for communication, use of student iPads, and issuing students and staff with a specific amount of printer credits.
- We have invested in mugs made from recycled plastic in an effort to cut down on the amount of waste generated from plastic and polystyrene cups. This initiative was led by the Eco-Schools Group. The Cut the Cups campaign encouraged students to bring in their own water bottles. This has meant no plastic cups are now used in school.
- We have a rolling programme of insulating single skin walls to reduce heat loss, thus helping to reduce our use of fossil fuels.
- Eco-Schools have introduced an anti-idling campaign with signs around the outside of the school reminding parents to switch off their engines when picking up students.
- Students are deeply concerned about the clothing industry's toxic footprint and its impact, particularly on the poorest communities around the globe. The Climate Action Group have combined with parent volunteers to run a very successful Uniform Shop which aims to significantly reduce our uniform forming part of the many thousands of tonnes of clothing going into landfill every year. Through various activities, SJL's (student-led) Climate Action Group work to raise awareness of the impact of climate change, both within school and across the wider community. Such practical actions are empowering and help to build resilience as we strive towards a net-zero world.

Our School

Sir John Lawes School has many awards and accolades but what do they all mean? Here is a brief overview that explains what we have received and why.



Outstanding Ofsted

This award is the one that you are probably most familiar with and represents the judgement from our most recent Ofsted inspection where we were recognised as being 'Outstanding'. This is the highest accolade given by Ofsted.



NPQH Leadership Development School

All trainee Headteachers participating in the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) are entitled to a placement at an NCSL Leadership Development School. The aim is to raise the aspirations of trainee Headteachers, enable them to experience excellence, and encourage them to be influenced by the country's very best school leaders. As a Leadership Development School we contribute towards these objectives and help to develop future leaders that share our high standards.



School Achievement Award

The scheme was originally developed to celebrate the achievements of schools that have either made significant improvements or are high-performing. The majority of the awards are given for either rapid improvement or good results.



Emotional Mental Wellbeing in Education

Achieved Advanced Practice status in the Hertfordshire Emotional & Mental Wellbeing in Schools Mark, recognising our strong commitment to supporting students' mental and emotional wellbeing every day.



Eco-Schools Green Flag Award

Eco-Schools is an international award programme that guides schools on their sustainable journey, providing a framework to help embed these principles into the heart of school life. The Green Flag award recognises excellence in the field of environmental activity.



Music Mark

The Music Mark is recognition of a commitment to providing high quality music education for all children and young people. It acknowledges the value placed on music in the school, both through the taught curriculum and the many extended curricular opportunities that are offered to students.



Alban TSH

The Alban Teaching School Hub is one of 87 newly designated school-led centres of excellence for teacher development. Teaching school hubs are ambassadors for the world class delivery of new teacher development reforms in England. Our overall responsibility is to maximise opportunity and development to teachers at all stages of their development; this work is focused on the golden thread of teacher development from ITT to school leadership.

The Golden Thread Award has been awarded to SJL by the Alban Teaching School Hub for our commitment to staff professional development, supporting teachers from their initial teacher training, through the Early Careers Framework, to higher National Professional Qualifications.



Artsmark Gold

The Artsmark is a national benchmark for the provision of art, dance, drama and music. Schools that have the Artsmark award have had to meet a number of stringent criteria that demonstrate the quality of their work in these areas. There are three levels of award with Artsmark Gold being the very highest that can be achieved.



The School Games Mark

We have achieved the School Games Gold Mark Award - a Government-led award scheme launched in 2012, facilitated by the Youth Sport Trust to reward schools for their commitment to the development of competition across their school and into the community, and we are delighted to have been recognised for our success.

Network for Excellence Lead School in Computer Science

SJL is officially recognised as a regional centre of excellence for the teaching of Computer Science. The school has embraced new initiatives and changes to the Computing curriculum and provides high-quality teaching of the subject at all key stages as well as running a successful Coding Club in conjunction with local software company Ensoft. Awarded Lead School status in January 2013, SJL plays a key part in the high profile national initiative to develop the teaching of Computer Science, supported by the DfE, OCR, CPHC, Microsoft and Google.

Less CO₂

SJL have followed a program with a hub of St Albans schools to reduce its CO₂ use making changes and improvements to our school to reduce energy usage, save money on bills and lower our CO₂ emissions.



School Values

The shared values of the school community are summed up in the Sir John Lawes ACE which underpins everything that we do and provides a secure basis for all we strive to accomplish.

- Achievement
- Care
- Excellent

Our vision for the school is to produce responsible young people of whom we can all be proud, who have achieved more than they ever believed possible and who are prepared to make a contribution to their local, national and global communities.

House System

Every member of the SJL community, students and staff, as well as being in a tutor group and a year group, belongs to a House. The Houses - Austen, Britten, Hepworth, King, Lawes, Newton and Ryder - are all named after leaders in their field, strivers, achievers and positive role models.

As House members all students have a wide range of opportunities to work together and 'compete' against other students and the other Houses in a wide range of competitions and events, earning House points in the process. Some activities are woven into lessons, while others take place at lunchtime or after school, offering even more ways for students to get involved in school life.

Each House also hosts its own competition every half term, with forms and Houses entering teams to compete for valuable House points. Recent events have included:

- Hepworth's Colour Chaos – a series of exciting challenges, from maths puzzles and cube-solving to volleyball keep-ups and giant slingshot targets.
- Win, Lawes or Draw – a creative competition featuring speed drawing, detailed artwork and a "guess the image" challenge.
- Newton's House of Gameshows – a fast-paced contest inspired by popular television game shows, including Catchphrase, Countdown and The Hit List.
- Austen's Got Talent – a week-long talent competition where students showcase skills such as singing, dance, comedy and magic.

Alongside House competitions, students can earn House points through a variety of whole-school events, from festive form room decorating and charity fundraising initiatives to our annual Sports Day. Every point contributes to the race for the prestigious House Cup, which is awarded in the end of year final assembly.




Ofsted
Outstanding
Provider

‘Pupils demonstrate consistently positive manners, thoughtfulness and excellent behaviour.’



Sir John Lawes School
Education for a changing world

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Scholars'
Education Trust

The Scholars' Education Trust was formed in 2012 with the aim of enabling its member schools to work in genuine partnership to strengthen themselves and their communities. Its focus is to produce responsible young people of whom all can be proud, who have achieved more than they ever believed possible and who are prepared to make a contribution to their local, national and global opportunities.